

MEDIA ACTION GRASSROOTS NETWORK



#RightToConnect

The Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net) - made up of nearly 200 organizations - is the only multi-issue national network advocating for the communication rights of social justice sectors and underrepresented communities in the U.S. We believe the right to communicate and therefore the right to transform our world belongs to everyone. Yet across the country, the right to communicate is being denied to millions of people.



There are 2.7 million children whose families can't afford the cost of a phone call from their parents in prison. There are 100 million people who lack an Internet connection at home because it's too expensive. This is especially true for poor communities, where only 47% of households making \$25,000 or less have an Internet connection at home. In the face of these disparities, it is critical we claim our right to communicate.

Right now, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is considering reforms to the prison telephone industry that would establish an affordable flat rate for all phone calls out of jails, prisons and detention facilities, ending a practice of price gouging. The FCC is also considering modernizing the Lifeline program, which would help low-income families afford an Internet connection at home.

The Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net) along with our partners are here today to work with Congress and urge the FCC to move forward on both of these issues.

Quick Facts

Lifeline Program:

For over three decades the Lifeline program has helped millions of low-income Americans gain access to the phone services they need.

- 40% of households with school-age kids lack fast enough Internet service to do homework.
- Only 64% of African Americans and 53% of Latinos have Internet access at home -- that number dips down to 51% for households with limited english proficiency.
- Through a modest monthly subsidy (\$9.25), eligible families are able to access the service they need most through Lifeline.

Gina Juarez, Lifeline customer

"The Lifeline Telephone service was so helpful, it was one less thing we had to worry about and phone service is such a necessity. When my husband's disability stopped and he began looking for work he needed a reliable contact number and because of the Lifeline program he had one."

Prison Phone Rates:

With people incarcerated an average of 100-150 miles from home, phone calls have increasingly become the most common method for incarcerated people and their families stay connected.

- Average phone calls from prison cost 24 times more than calls outside of prison.
- 11 states across the country have rates less than 10 cents a minute - including some as low as 3.2 cents a minute.
- Kickbacks from state prisons add up to \$152 million annually, paid mostly by low-income families.

Family member of Incarcerated person

"I pay about \$5 a phone call whether it's 2 minutes or a half hour. It's become extremely difficult to afford it, but I pay it because my husband needs someone on the outside to be there for him and to talk to."